

dictatorship as non-democracy (311) and do attempt to highlight some of the defining traits of the USSR, such as economic planning and public ownership, along with the prominent public role of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Unfortunately, the treatment of such—to this reviewer—central elements of the Soviet system is cursory and of little import to the book's main arguments. With regard to ideology in particular, the authors' treatment of Marxism-Leninism as a "language spoken by political actors that knitted the ruling elite together" (93) is intuitively plausible, but somewhat difficult to square with the party's repeated campaigns to expel careerists, or indeed the notion that for some committed members, political exclusion could be "a life-shattering blow" leading to "depression and, on occasion, suicide" (307). Similarly, though the pressures of taut planning are acknowledged as a major factor in center-periphery dynamics, there is no broader discussion of the political economy of the USSR as a determinant of the evolution of sub-state politics, or conversely, of sub-state pressures as drivers of central economic policy. The absence of an index entry on Alexei Kosygin or the reforms associated with his name is symptomatic in that regard, although the connection between the growth of regional autonomy in the political and economic sphere during the Brezhnev era is alluded to in the chapter on party governors (279).

One book can only do so much, however. The authors have certainly succeeded in their main goal of providing a granular account of Soviet politics on the substate level over an extensive timeframe. Like all good pieces of research, *Substate Dictatorship* raises questions as well as providing answers. This book will be an essential starting point for future research into all aspects of post-WWII Soviet history, including those it addresses only partially.

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***Environment and Post-Soviet Transformation in Kazakhstan's Aral Sea Region.***

By William Wheeler. London: UCL Press, 2021. xii, 262 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$25.00, paper.  
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.221

In his book, William Wheeler traces the transformation of the Aral Sea across time and space to elucidate broader ecological, social, economic, and political transformations. As the Soviet Union collapsed, so did the centralized state institutions that had not only managed the rivers flowing into the Aral Sea, but the fish stocks that had once populated it. What remained visible to the outside world was a desiccated sea considered to be dead and one of the greatest ecological tragedies of the twentieth century.

Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Kazakhstan, Wheeler illuminates the complex situation on the ground in Aral'sk, Kazakhstan. By spending twelve months in Aral'sk and the surrounding villages, Wheeler captured critiques regarding the disaster narrative of the Aral region. Yet, this is not a book just about the Aral Sea and its environmental impacts and attempts at its restoration, but rather about the "continuities and ruptures of Soviet socialism and postsocialism" (9). The Aral Sea becomes a lens to examine the bureaucratic structures of the Soviet state as well as the various meanings of the sea and the fish that have populated the sea for the communities in proximity to it. At times, the book is less about the sea, but about the fish industry and the fishermen's understanding of their local environment and its change, as well as their connections to global supply chains that link them to European consumers and Chinese net manufacturers.

The book is organized chronologically; the first four chapters examine the sea's regression. Wheeler leverages rich archival material about the Russian colonial and Soviet attempts to control and transform the Aral Sea and the political economy of the region, in which he finds "homologous histories of dispossession" (37). Chapter 1 provides a nuanced and methodical recounting of the modernization processes that led to the development of the fishery in the northern Aral, its transformation into a "socialist fishery" (45), and the role of collectivization and cotton in altering the Central Asian landscape. Throughout, Wheeler includes photos from the Museum of Fishermen in Aral'sk to help to visualize the fishing boats and fish factory from this period; unfortunately, owing to their age, the images are frequently hard to discern. Chapter 2 delves into the heart of the Soviet state—its bureaucracy—to elucidate how the Soviet bureaucracy responded to the receding sea and the loss of the sea's fishery through the import of ocean fish to be processed in local factories. Through the lens of the sea's fishery, Wheeler revisits defunct debates pertaining to the proposed diversion of the flow of Siberian rivers. Combined, these historical chapters provide a comprehensive survey of natural resource (mis)management and economic policies during the Soviet period.

What stands out in the book are the conversations with informants about memories from the Soviet period. In Chapter 3, Wheeler astutely captures competing narratives of life in Aral'sk in which informants describe memories of "a good life" and "stable employment" (93). There are "memories of leisure" (94) when it comes to the sea and Wheeler documents stories of postsocialist nostalgia. While memories vary, Wheeler also notes that many of the narratives of the Aral disaster were constructed from outside the region, either by those in Moscow or international actors.

Chapters 5 to 7 situate international attempts to restore the Aral Sea within development debates as well as connections to global supply chains. While Wheeler underscores that "there was nothing inevitable about the sea's restoration" (142), Chapter 5 weaves back and forth across global and local efforts that ultimately led to the restoration of the Small Aral Sea in Kazakhstan. Most notably and often missing in global accounts of international development interventions in the Aral Sea is a discussion of the locally led efforts to place a dam between the large and small seas. By focusing on a Danish aid project to revitalize the fishery sector, Wheeler offers an alternative perspective; specifically, the way in which Danish activists worked with the villages to rebuild the fishery and to support the establishment of a local NGO—Aral Tenizi—offers an important case study for building social capital and small-scale fisheries. Ultimately, according to Wheeler, the "postsocialist sea" becomes not only "an object of management" but also a "source of economic value" (232).

While the main audience for this book is the Central Asian studies community, it would be a shame if scholars and students of fisheries did not read this book.

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***Klimat: Russia in the Age of Climate Change.*** By Thane Gustafson. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2021. xiv, 312 pp. Notes. Index. Figures. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.222

For a decade, Vladimir Putin and other Russian leaders have tossed off the threat of climate change. Putin famously said that Russians could spend less on fur coats with a warming planet. Like other oil powers, the US included, Russian leaders have